

CREATING A SIGNATURE

Pinkeeper

“’Tis a gift to be simple, ’Tis a gift to be free,
’Tis a gift to come down where you ought to be.”

— Shaker hymn



I make simple pinkeepers like this one and those on the following pages by simply gathering material around my chosen stuffing (see tips at right), tying the ball at the bottom with string or a rubber band, trimming, and gluing the ball into an old cast-iron patty mold, canning jar, or gelatin mold.

JELLY JAR *Pinkeeper*

Supply List

- 1 scrap fabric, about 12" x 12"
- 1 1/2-pint jelly jar, without lid
- 40 small scraps of fabric in varying colors, about 4" x 4"
- 1 skein black embroidery floss
- 1 spool all-purpose sewing thread
- Embroidery needle
- Stuffing

Instructions

1. Lay the large scrap of fabric on your work surface, right side down. Set the jelly jar in the middle of it, top up. Pick up the edges of the fabric and pull them up to enclose the jar. Gather them together across the mouth of the jar, pin the fabric in place, and stitch securely.
2. Place one of the small scraps of fabric facedown on your work surface. Place your chosen stuffing in the center of it. Gather up the edges of the fabric to enclose the stuffing, creating a fabric "stem." Push a threaded needle through the stem and wrap the thread around it several times. Secure with a knot. Repeat with the remaining scraps of fabric.
3. Embellish the center of each ball with a French knot (page 52).
4. Working on the back side of the balls (the side where the fabric is gathered and held in place), make a patchwork of balls by stitching them together in a circular shape (refer to photo at right).
5. Place a few uncovered balls of stuffing on top of the fabric that is covering the top of the jelly jar to create a dome shape. Place the patchwork of balls on top, making sure the outermost balls overlap the edge of the jar. Stitch your patchwork of balls to the fabric that is covering the jelly jar to complete your pinkeeper.

STUFFING IT

Common cotton balls will work, but only if you pull them apart and fluff them first. Otherwise, poly stuffing is ideal; the needles seem to meet with less resistance. Or use fine sand (you might need a thin liner) and dried lavender—a sachet and pinkeeper rolled into one. The sand will help keep your needles sharp. Better yet, try sawdust. (I took apart a store-bought pinkeeper that worked well and found plain sawdust inside.) If you have a local source for raw wool (washed, of course, so it doesn't create oily lanolin stains on your fabric), it is as fluffy as poly stuffing and doesn't shift around like cotton. Family haircuts? Don't toss your locks ... they also make excellent stuffing; likewise, old panty hose.



Know someone itchin' to get stitchin'...

or striking out on their own? A beginner's pinkeeper is easy to make using any size canning jar you can find. Fill it with extra buttons for mending, a tape measure, a small pair of scissors, three small spools of mending thread (black, white, and tan), a thimble, and a few safety pins. Top it off with a ball of stuffing encased in a scrap of fabric that is then wrapped around the inner lid and stitched. Adorn it with pins and needles.



Using the idea on the previous page, cover your fabric ball with a pretty doily before gluing it in place like the gelatin-mold pinkeeper at bottom left. Over time, I've discovered that knick-knacks can become pinkeepers too!